

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
JUDICIAL BRANCH
<http://www.courts.state.nh.us>

Court Name: _____
Case Name: _____
Case Number: _____
(if known)

**NOTICE OF PILOT PROJECT
RELATIVE TO ABUSE / NEGLECT HEARINGS**

This notice is to inform you that while abuse and neglect hearings are generally closed to the public pursuant to RSA 169-C:14, the New Hampshire legislature has established pilot projects in Grafton, Rockingham, and Sullivan counties governed by Chapter 221, which opens abuse and neglect hearings to the public, subject to certain restrictions.

Under chapter 221, abuse and neglect hearings in these counties will be open to the public unless the court determines that the disclosure of some or all of the evidence would be contrary to the best interests of the child, or that disclosure would cause unreasonable harm to one or more of the parties. Any party may request the court to order, or the court on its own initiative may order, that all or a portion of a hearing be closed to the public.

HOWEVER, medical and psychological reports, records, and profiles, and testimony referring to the contents of such reports, records, and profiles, shall remain confidential in ALL abuse and neglect proceedings.

FURTHERMORE, when the child who is the subject of the proceedings is present at a hearing, it shall be presumed that admitting non-parties would be contrary to the best interest of the child, or would cause unreasonable harm.

As a party to this proceeding, you have a right to invite anyone you choose to the hearing.

A PRE-HEARING CONFERENCE involving the parties to the case and counsel will be held on the record prior to all abuse and neglect hearings to determine if any or all of the evidence and testimony to be presented will necessitate closing the hearing. If unexpected issues arise after the commencement of the hearing, any party or the presiding judge may request a break in the proceedings for another conference to resolve the unanticipated issues impacting the confidentiality of the proceedings.

FOSTER PARENTS AND RELATIVE CAREGIVERS are invited to attend review hearings and permanency hearings, even if the hearings have been closed to the public.

Requests to close to the public all or portions of the next scheduled hearing and any subsequent hearings must be submitted in writing, including the reasons for the request, prior to the commencement of each hearing.